

REMARKS

Claims 1-7 were all the claims pending in the application.

Review and reconsideration on the merits are requested.

Turning first to **Election/Restrictions**, Applicants elect the species of claim 2, noting that claim 1 is generic, and submit that all remaining active claims (claim 1, claim 4, claim 5, claim 6 and claim 8) read thereon.

Applicants note that at the top of page 6 the Examiner indicates that claims 3 and 6-7 are withdrawn from consideration. Applicants believe that claim 6 is properly examined with claim 1, and request clarification.

Turning now to **Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 112**, claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

The Examiner finds it unclear as to how claim 6 further limits claim 1, etc. Applicants amend claim 6 by positively reciting that the composite structure comprises part of an aircraft body.

Withdrawal is requested.

Prior art considered: WO 99/39976 Dean et al (Dean); U.S. Patent 5,580,502 Forster et al (Forster); U.S. Patent 5,242,523 Wilden et al (Wilden).

Allowable Subject Matter

At page 7 of the Action, the Examiner, in Paragraph 11, indicates that claim 2 is objected as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

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Applicants essentially rewrite claim 2 in independent form by combining claims 1 and 2.

Applicants add new claim 8 which emphasizes one major aspect of the present invention, i.e., a sufficiently lightweight composite structure having a three-dimensionally curved portion and a cylindrical portion can be produced by forming the three-dimensionally curved portion composed of a honeycomb sandwich panel and a cylindrical portion composed of a stiffened panel at the same time. (underscoring added). See page 2, lines 13-17 in the specification.

With respect to the amendment to claim 1 “wherein said assembly is formed by heating under a pressure while disposing an elastic plate and a pressed plate on a thin portion where said outer skin and said inner skin overlap each other” (original claim 2), see pages 3, lines 8-11 of the specification.

While Applicants believe all active claims to now be allowable since the subject matter of claim 2 has been included into independent claim 1 and new independent claim 8, thereby narrowing claim 1 to the subject matter of claim 2 and the equivalents thereof, claim 8 having a scope similar to claim 1 but including the “at the same time” language, they do offer a few brief comments on the prior art.

If for some reason the Examiner does not find the claims as presently amended to be allowable, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the later given local telephone exchange so that additional remarks may be presented.

Dean teaches a method for producing a composite panel either of 18 or of 62 shown in Fig. 12 or Fig. 27 each having a 3-D curved portion and a cylindrical portion. However, Dean fails to teach arranging a preformed frame member and a preformed stringer member each made

of a composite prepreg on a portion of the inner skin that forms the cylindrical portion to prepare an assembly and to form the assembly by heating under pressure.

Forster teaches a method for fabricating a composite article having a composite stiffening member co-cure boned in an integral composition wherein the composite article comprises outer mold line (OML) and inner mold line (IML) composite skins having a modified honeycomb core interposed therebetween (see column 3, lines 40-46, and Fig. 4 in view of Fig. 1).

However, as with Dean, Forster fails to teach not only arranging a preformed frame member and a preformed stringer member each made of a composite prepreg on a portion of the inner skin that forms the cylindrical portion to prepare an assembly and to form the assembly by heating under pressure, but also the composite panel or article is preferably formed by heating under a pressure while disposing an elastic plate and a press plate on a fin portion where the outer skin and the inner skin overlap each other.


Wilden discloses a method for forming and curing an intricate structure of criss-crossing composite stringers 14, 16, 18 and frames 26, 28, 30 that are bonded to a skin panel 12 for use as a portion of an aircraft fuselage, a boat hull, or the like (see Abstract, lines 1-6; column 2, line 22 to column 3, line 10 and Fig. 3).

Although Wilden teaches heat-curing under a pressure in a vacuum bag (see column 2, line 58 to column 3, line 10), Wilden is silent regarding any structure as such formed by heating under pressure while disposing an elastic plate and a press plate on a fin portion where the outer skin and the inner skin overlap each other.

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Withdrawal of all rejections and allowance is requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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